

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 1703

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: CI, PINT, ELAB

SUBJECT: CLASH BETWEEN GOC AND LABOR LEADERS

REF: A. SANTIAGO 0551; JAN 5; (B) SANTIAGO A-40, FEB 26

1. SUMMARY: ALMOST ALL LABOR LEADER MEMBERS OF NATIONAL LABOR COORDINATION COMMITTEE (REF A) FAILED TO ATTEND MEETING WITH GOVERNMENT TO DISCUSS GOC DRAFT SOCIAL STATUTE OF ENTERPRISES (REF B). IN SUBSEQUENT PRESS CONFERENCE LABOR MINISTER REACTED SHARPLY, ATTRIBUTING FAILURE OF MEETING TO POLITICAL INFLUENCE, AND THREATENING SANCTIONS FOR SUCH INTERFERENCE IN THE FUTURUE. INCIDENT SHOWS LACK OF COMMUNICATION AND UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN GOC AND LABOR. END SUMMARY.

2. LABOR MINISTRY CALLED MEETING MARCH 13 OF COORDINATION COMMITTEE IN ORDER TO DISCUSS LABOR ANALYSIS AND REACTION TO GOC DRAFT SOCIAL STATUTE OF ENTERPRISES. ONLY SIX OF 22 COMMITTEE MEMBERS ATTENDED, PRESUMABLY INCLUDING THE FOUR MEMBERS WHO ARE NOT FROM LABOR FIELD, AND MEETING WAS CANCELLED.

3. SANTIAGO'S "EL MERCURIO" MARCH 17 EDITORIALIZED THAT THE
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ABSENT LABOR LEADERS HAD MISSED AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLAIN

THEIR CONCERNS WITH DRAFT, AND THAT THEY WOULD HAVE TO JUSTIFY THEIR ABSENCE TO THOSE WHOM THEY REPRESENT. MARCH 20 EDITORIAL MORE POINTEDLY ACCUSED LEADERS OF ACTING POLITICALLY AND THREATENED "SANCTIONS" AGAINST THEM.

4. MORE IMPORTANTLY, LABOR MINISTER GENERAL DIAZ IN MARCH 17 PRESS CONFERENCE RAISED QUESTION OF POLITICAL INFLUENCE IN LABOR NONATTENDANCE. IN SHARP ATTACK ON CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PDC) AND ITS LABOR-LEADER MEMBERS, DIAZ SAID "THERE IS A POLITICAL PARTY THAT HAS NOT CONVINCED ITSELF IT IS IN RECESS AND IS USING NATIONAL TRADE UNION LEADERS FOR PARTY ENDS. SOME OF THESE LEADERS LENT THEMSELVES TO THE MANEUVER". DIAZ REFUSED TO NAME PARTY OR LEADERS BUT SAID THEY SHOULD BE CAREFUL: "WE SHALL LET PASS THIS TIME THE ANTIPATRIOTIC INTENTIONS OF THOSE WHO HAVE FORGOTTEN THAT THERE EXIST A STATE OF SIEGE, LAW OF INTERNAL SECURITY OF THE STATE, AND RECESS OF POLITICAL PARTIES." THE ANNOYED MINISTER ADDED THAT THERE WOULD BE FREE PASS AND SOJOURN TO SOME CORNER OF THE COUNTRY FOR THOSE WHO DO NOT ADHERE TO CONDITIONS IN WHICH COUNTRY LIVES.

5. SEVERAL LABOR MEMBERS OF COORDINATION COMMITTEE TOLD EMBASSY THERE HAD BEEN NO PLANNED BOYCOTT OF MARCH 13 MEETING. RATHER, PUT OFF BY ORGANIZATION, AIMS, AND UNFORTUNATE BEGINNING OF COMMITTEE (REF A), AND SURE THAT LABOR VIEWS ON DRAFT STATUTE WOULD NOT BE SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED BY GOC, VARIOUS LABOR MEMBERS ON THEIR OWN CONCLUDED THERE WAS NO POINT IN ATTENDING. PDC PRESIDENT AYLWYN REPORTEDLY TOLD SENIOR PDC LABOR LEADER THEY SHOULD HAVE BEEN MORE CAREFUL, SINCE THERE IS PRESSURE WITHIN GOC TO DISSOLVE PDC.

6. SEVERAL MEMBERS TOLD EMBASSY AFTER DIAZ PRESS CONFERENCE THEY WERE NOT DISPLEASED WITH THREAT OF DETENTION OR INTERNAL EXILE. THEY ARE UNDER PRESSURE OF THEIR MEMBERSHIP TO TAKE STRONGER POSITION AGAINST GOC, AND MARTYRIZATION WOULD STRENGTHEN THEIR POSITIONS. THEY WOULD NOT SEEK FURTHER CONFRONTATION, BUT IT COULD COME AGAIN OVER DRAFT LABOR CODE, WHICH HAS GONE TO JUNTA FOR CONSIDERATION. LEADERS ALSO MENTIONED SIGNIFICANCE OF MAY 1 CELEBRATION IN THIS CONTEXT.

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7. COMMENT: WE FIND IT HARD TO CREDIT THAT ALMOST ALL LABOR MEMBERS AVOIDED MEETING ON INDIVIDUAL BASIS. POINT IS, HOWEVER, THAT GOC AND LABOR FAIL TO COMMUNICATE AT NATIONAL LEVEL. GOVERNMENT HAS ITS OWN CONCEPTION OF ROLE OF LABOR IN NEW CHILE, WHICH DIFFERS GREATLY FROM THAT OF MOST LABOR LEADERS. GOC MILITARY LEADERSHIP ALSO TENDS TO LOOK AT COMMUNICATION AS ONE-WAY AFFAIR, AND REACTS TO FAILURE OF OTHER SIDE TO FOLLOW ITS COMMANDS UNQUESTIONINGLY BY THREATENING TO

INCARCERATE "BAD" LEADERS.

8. LABOR'S REFUSAL TO TALK TO GOVERNMENT CAN BE CRITICIZED. LEADERS CONCERNED, HOWEVER, APPEAR TO SUSPECT THAT STATUTE OF ENTERPRISE, TOGETHER WITH NEW LABOR CODE, WHOSE CONTENTS ARE NOT YET PUBLICLY KNOWN, WILL LEAD TO CREATION OF SOME KIND OF PARALLEL LABOR MOVEMENT. THEY BELIEVE THEY ARE ONLY BEING INFORMED OF DECISIONS AND CANNOT PARTICIPATE EFFECTIVELY IN MAKING THEM. AND THEY RESENT THE CREATION OF LABOR REPRESENTATION BY DESIGNATION INSTEAD OF ELECTION. PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANTLY, IT SEEMS TO EMBASSY THEY DISLIKE DRAFT STATUTE BECAUSE IT WOULD REMOVE SOME OF THEIR POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AND DIMINISH IMPORTANCE OF THEIR ORGANIZATIONS. AS WITH CONSTITUTIONAL COMMISSION'S DEFINITION OF ROLE OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN FUTURE, THERE IS NO DOUBT GOC ENVISAGES MUCH MORE LIMITED ROLE FOR CHILEAN UNIONS THAN THEY FORMERLY EXERCISED.
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